8122.c.1 (37)

THE

Earl of ESSEX's SPEECH

At the Delivery of the

PETITION

To the KING, *Jan.* 25. 1680.

May it please Your Majesty,

THE Lords here present, together with divers other Peers of the Realm, taking notice that by Your late Proclamation Your Majesty has declared an Intention of Calling a Parliament at Oxford; *and observing from Histories and Records, how unfortunate many such Assemblies have been, when Called at Places Remote from Your Capital City; as particularly the Congress in* Henry the Second's *Time, at* Clarendon, *three Several Parliaments at* Oxford *in* Henry the Third's *Time; and that at* Coventry *in* Henry the Sixth's *Time; with divers others which have proved fatal to those Kings, and have been followed with great Mischiefs on the Kingdom; and considering the present Posture of Affairs, the many Jealousies and Discontents which are amongst the People, we have great Cause to Apprehend that the Consequences of the Sitting of a Parliament now at* Oxford, *may be as fatal to Your Majesty, and the Nation, as those others mentioned have been to the then Reigning Kings; And therefore we do conceive that we cannot answer it to God, to Your Majesty, or to the People; if we being Peers of the Realm, should not on so important an Occasion, humbly offer our Advice to Your Majesty, that, if possible, Your Majesty may be Prevailed with to alter this (as we apprehend) unseasonable Resolution. The Grounds and Reasons of our Opinion are contained in this our Petition, which we humbly present to Your Majesty.*

To the KING's Most Excellent Majesty. The Humble PETITION and Advice of the Lords undernamed; PEERS of the Realm.

Humbly sheweth,

THat whereas Your Majesty hath been pleased, by divers Speeches and Messages, to Your Houses of Parliament, rightly to represent to them the dangers that threatned Your Majesty's Person, and the whole Kingdom, from the mischievous and wicked Plots of the Papists, and the too suddain growth of a Foriegn Power, unto which no stop or remedy could be provided, unless it were by Parliament, and an Union of all Your Majesty's Protestant Subjects in one Mind and Interest.

And the Lord Chancellor, in pursuance of Your Majesty's Command, having more at large demonstrated the said Dangers to be as great as we, in the midst of our fears, could imagine them; and so pressing, that our Liberties, Religion, Lives, and the whole Kingdom, would be certainly lost, if a speedy Provision were not made against them.

And Your Majesty on the 21st of *April*, 1679. having call'd unto Your Council many honourable and worthy persons, and declar'd

clar'd unto them and Your whole Kingdom, that being ſenſible of the Evil Effects of a ſingle Miniſtry, or private Advices, or Forein Committees, for the general Direction of Your Affairs, Your Majeſty would for the future refer all things unto that Council. And by the Conſtant Advice of them, together with the frequent Uſe of Your Great Council the Parliament, Your Majeſty was reſolved hereafter to Govern Your Kingdoms, we began to hope we ſhould ſee an end of our Miſeries.

But to our unſpeakable Grief and Sorrow, we ſoon found our Expectations fruſtrated; the Parliament then ſubſiſting, was Prorogued and Diſſolved before it could perfect what was intended for our Relief and Security. And though another was thereupon call'd, yet by many Prorogations, it was put off to the 21ſt of *October* laſt: And notwithſtanding Your Majeſty was then again pleas'd to acknowledge, that neither Your Perſon nor the Kingdom could be ſafe until the Matter of the Plot was gone through, it was unexpectedly Prorogued on the tenth day of this Month, before any ſufficient Order could be taken therein. All their Juſt and Pious Endeavours to ſave the Nation were overthrown; the good Bills they had been induſtriouſly preparing to unite all Your Proteſtant Subjects, brought to naught. The Diſcovery of the Iriſh Plot ſtifled. The Witneſſes that came in frequently more fully to declare, that both of *England* and *Ireland* diſcouraged. Thoſe Foreign Kingdoms and States, who by a happy Conjunction with us, might give a check to the French Power diſheartned; even to ſuch a Deſpair of their own Security againſt the growing Greatneſs of that Monarch, as we fear may induce them to take new Reſolutions, and perhaps ſuch as may be fatal to us. The Strength and Courage of our Enemies, both at home and abroad increaſed; and our ſelves left in the utmoſt Danger of ſeeing our Country brought into utter Deſolation.

In theſe great Extremities we had nothing under God to comfort us, but the hopes that Your Majeſty being touched with the Groans of Your periſhing People, would have ſuffered the Parliament to meet at the day unto which it was Prorogued, and that no farther Interruptions ſhould have been given to their Proceedings, in order to the ſaving of the Nation: But that failed us too, when we heard that Your Majeſty, by the private ſuggeſtions of ſome wicked perſons, Favourers of Popery, Promoters of French Deſigns, and Enemies to Your Majeſty and the Kingdom (without the Advice, and as we have good Reaſon to believe, againſt the Opinion of Your Privy Council) had been prevailed with to Diſſolve it, and to call another to meet at *Oxford*, where neither Lords nor Commons can be in ſafety, but will be daily expoſed to the Swords of the Papiſts and their adherents, of whom too many have crept into Your Majeſties Guards. The Liberty of ſpeaking, according to their Conſciences, will be thereby deſtroyed, and the Validity of all their Acts and Proceedings conſiſting in it, left diſputable. The ſtraitneſs of the place no ways admits of ſuch a Concourſe of perſons as now follows every Parliament. The Witneſſes which are neceſſary to give Evidence againſt the Popiſh Lords, ſuch Judges, or others whom the Commons have Impeached, or had reſolved to Impeach, can neither bear the Charge of going thither, nor truſt themſelves under the Protection of a Parliament, that is it ſelf evidently under the power of Guards and Souldiers.

The Premiſes conſidered, We Your Majeſties Petitioners out of a juſt Abhorrence of ſuch a dangerous and pernicious Counſel (which the Authors have not dared to avow) and the direful apprehenſions of the Calamities and Miſeries that may enſue thereupon, do make it our moſt humble Prayer and Advice, that the Parliament may not Sit at a place where it will not be able to act with that Freedom, which is neceſſary and eſſential to give unto their Acts and Proceedings that Authority which they ought to have amongſt the People, and have ever had, unleſs impaired by ſome awe upon them (of which there wants not Preſidents.) And that Your Majeſty will be graciouſly pleaſed to order it to Sit at *Weſtminſter*, it being the uſual Place, and where they may Conſult and Act with Safety and Freedom.

And Your Petitioners ſhall ever Pray, &c.

Monmouth.	*Shafteſbury.*
Kent.	*Mordant.*
Huntington.	*Eure.*
Bedford.	*Gray.*
Salſbury.	*Pagitt.*
Clare.	*Howard.*
Stamford.	*Herbert.*
Eſſex.	*De-la-mere.*

London, Printed for *Francis Smith* at the *Elephant* and *Caſtle* in *Cornhill*, near the *Royal Exchange*. 1681.